Staff Report

CONDITIONAL ZONING REQUEST

CASE NUMBER R #2/26 (CZ-14)

CITY OF LENOIR
PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Location map/Aerial Photograph



Subject Property:

108 Ellison Place

Summary

Owner
Steven & Katherine Strange

Applicant
Foresite Group

Location

710 Blowing Rock Blvd. (2.3 ac)

NC PIN

2850213080

Project Planner

Hannah Williams, AICP, CZO

Matt Duchan, AICP, CZO

Updated April 23, 2026

Applicant's Request:

The applicant is requesting to re-zone the subject property to a Conditional Zoning district (CZ-14) from B-6 (transitional business), to allow for a drive-through establishment with a residential buffer.

Staff Recommendation:
Approval, with the conditions outlined in the staff report.

Planning Board Recommendation:
Approval of the request based on the consistency statement on page 8.

Public Comment:

Two (2) citizens spoke in opposition of the proposed rezoning at the 3/9 meeting.

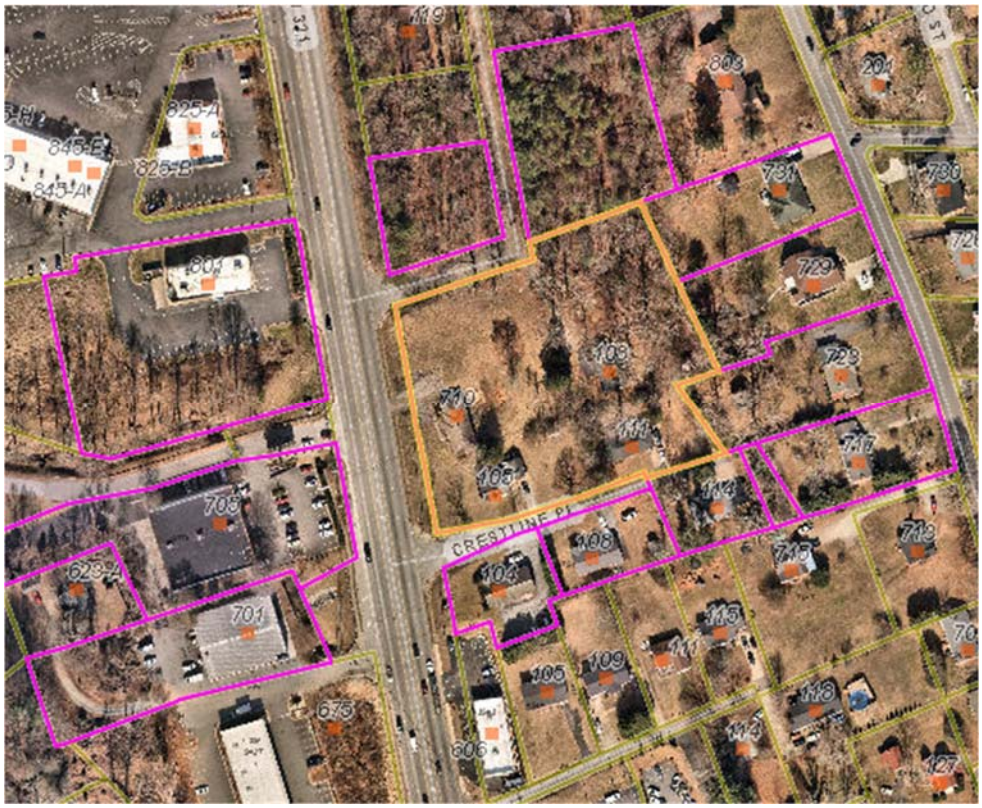
Two (2) citizens spoke in opposition of the proposed rezoning at the 3/30 meeting.

Planning Board Meeting: March 9, March 30, and April 13, 2026. Notices were mailed to adjacent property owners on February 25, 2026 and March 11, 2026. Case was tabled twice for further information from developer.

City Council (Public Hearing):

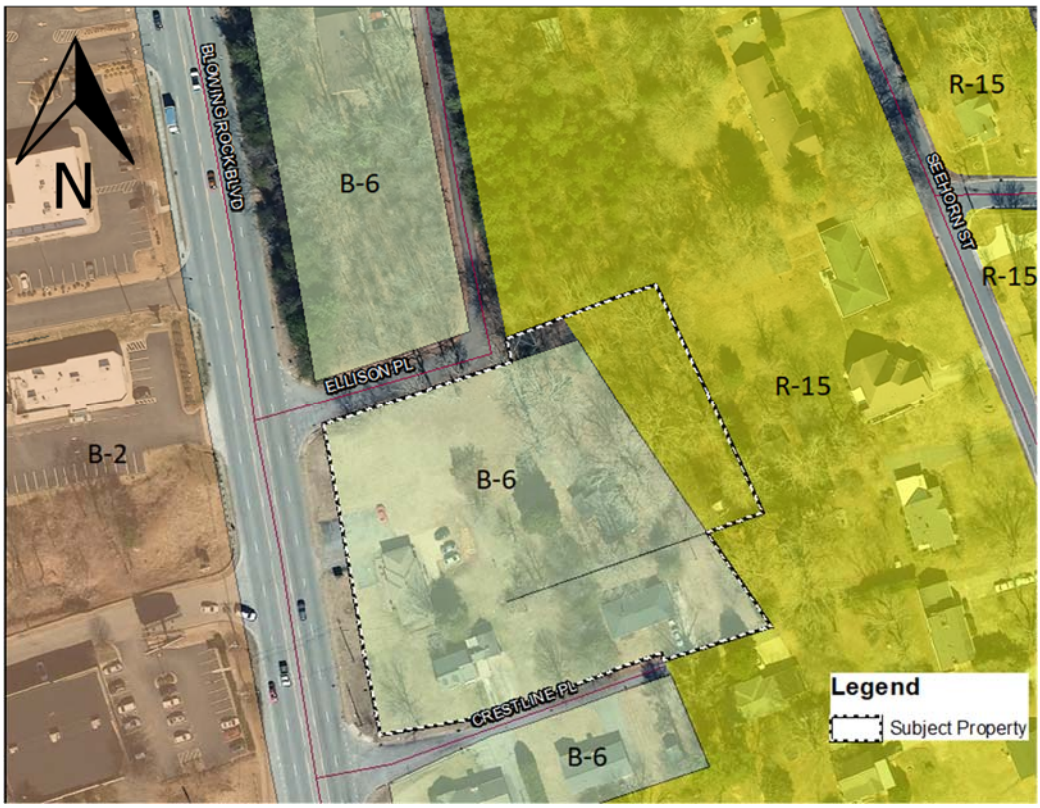
Scheduled for May 4, 2026.

ABUTTING PROPERTY OWNERS NOTIFIED



Owner1	Owner2	Address	City	State	Zip
STRANGE STEVEN	STRANGE KATHERINE	659 FORE DECK LN	EDISTO IS-LAND	SC	29438
HADLEY ROY WARREN	HADLEY DEBRA POARCH	803 SEEHORN ST NE	LENOIR	NC	28645
MAKKSO LINA ELIZABETH AMEZCUA		731 SEEHORN ST NE	Lenoir	NC	28645
BARRETT JOSEPH D	BARRETT DAWN	729 SEEHORN ST NE	LENOIR	NC	28645
JOHNSON SUSAN P	JOHNSON GEOFFREY HOW-ELL	4407 JUNIUS ST	DALLAS	TX	75246
FULMER FRED HILL	FULMER BOBBY	907 CHEROKEE PL SW	LENOIR	NC	28645
HARREN JAMES M	HARREN ELIZABETH	114 CRESTLINE PL	LENOIR	NC	28645
SP59 PROPERTIES LLC		220 EASTWOOD PARK DR SE	LENOIR	NC	28645
STORE CAPITAL ACQUISITIONS LLC	C/O AARON RENTS	309 E PACES FERRY RD NE	ATLANTA	GA	30305
HAVAS DOUGLAS J TRUSTEE OF	THE HAVAS FAMILY TRUST	20140 AMY LEE DR	CORNELIUS	NC	28031
HODGES PROPERTY MANAGEMENT LLC		1879 STARTOWN RD	HICKORY	NC	28602
LENOIR 2019 LLC		222 CLOISTER CT	CHAPEL HILL	NC	27514
OVERCASH REAL ESTATE LLC		1641 DALE EARNHARDT BLVD	KANNAPOLIS	NC	28083
WILLIAM G CURLIN	BISHOP ROMAN	PO BOX 36776	CHARLOTTE	NC	28236
ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF CHAR-LOTTE		1123 S CHURCH ST	CHARLOTTE	NC	28203
Lenoir Resident of:		105 CRESTLINE PL	LENOIR	NC	28645
Lenoir Resident of:		111 CRESTLINE PL	LENOIR	NC	28645

EXISTING ZONING



Subject Property:

Zoned B-6

PROPOSED ZONING



Subject Property:

Proposed CZ-14

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

Intent of Conditional Zoning

The City of Lenoir's Zoning Ordinance establishes an official zoning map/atlas for the City of Lenoir. The zoning map may be amended from time to time by the City Council when public necessity, convenience, general welfare, or good zoning practice justifies the amendment. Conditional Zoning is intended for use in unique development scenarios when a development proposal does not fit into a conventional zoning district, but may be desirable and compatible with an area depending on the specific details of the project and its surroundings.

The conditional zoning process gives the City sufficient flexibility to determine whether a specific project on a given site will be compatible with the environment and the Comprehensive Plan. Conditional Zoning is a legislative process requiring the Planning Board to review and make a recommendation to the City Council on the request. Each Conditional Zoning district is adopted as an ordinance and is recorded with the Register of Deeds.

Intent of Base Zoning District (B-6)

B - 6 (Transitional Business) District is intended to serve the needs of the traveling public as well as provide convenience goods and services to surrounding residential neighborhoods. This district is further intended to promote commercial activity in a high-volume traffic corridor that is in close proximity to well established, economically healthy residential neighborhoods, and as such requires design and performance standards to ensure commercial development occurs at compatible intensities, with appropriate architectural standards and buffering/screening requirements. Areas zoned B-6 tend to be already developed with medium density single family homes and a variety of multi-family uses, and are experiencing pressure for commercial expansion due to their close proximity to major transportation facilities. This district promotes incremental change to accommodate the conversion of existing structures into offices and low intensity retail or service uses, along with new development of non-residential uses, while allowing single family residences to remain as permitted land uses as the areas undergo gradual change.

Subject and Surrounding Properties

The 2.3 acre subject property is located along Blowing Rock Blvd. (US-321) between Crestline Place and Ellison Place. The property features four buildings. Two are rental homes addressed as 105 & 111 Crestline Place. Another building facing 321 is a house converted to office addressed as 710 Blowing Rock Blvd. There is also a vacant and deteriorated house toward the rear of the property that sits vacant addressed as 108 Ellison Place. The property abuts a single-family residential neighborhood to the east along Seehorn Street, while there are a few homes across Crestline as well as along Ellison. The subject property is situated amongst several undeveloped B-6 properties along the west side of Ellison Place. The R-15 zoning district is directly east of the site, while the vast majority of sites along 321 are zoned B-2 (general business) and developed with similar proposed uses such as light retail and restaurants with drive-throughs.

Reason for Request

The applicant is seeking to develop a coffee drive-through establishment with 21 stacking spaces (and a second, ready-to-build site) to reactivate a commercial area zoned for transitional business (see site plan on page 7). The proposed conditional zoning district (CZ-14) will allow for a drive-through and also buffer the established single-family houses nearby. Two existing residences on the subject property are proposed to be removed in order to develop the drive-through establishment.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS (CONT.)

Zoning Analysis

The site is zoned B-6 along a predominantly B-2 zoned corridor. As other B-2 sites on 321 have easily redeveloped in the last 10+ years, no development has occurred here despite several years on the market. Developing drive-throughs is a common use along the US-321 commercial corridor and the proposed establishment will likely be successful at this location.

Still, the surrounding low-density residential context calls for thoughtful transitions, so enhanced standards are proposed to protect the character and livability of the adjacent neighborhood. This development will be subject to the design standards common to the corridor and buffers for single-family and low-density uses can provide a protective transition.

The Conditional Zoning Ordinance will accommodate an eating and drinking establishment with a drive-through, providing for a wider setback adjacent to single family neighborhoods. A 30-foot-wide planted buffer is proposed along the R-15 zoned properties to sufficiently screen a busy and well-trafficked use away from neighboring residences. The buffer will also be supplemented with a 45 foot setback along abutting R-15 property lines. The Design Standards for Commercial, Office, Institutional, and Governmental Uses in Section 714 will be required to ensure an attractive and welcoming development with predictable standards that other recent developments in the 321 commercial corridor meet.

Additionally, drive-through establishments with a minimum of seven (7) stacking spaces per lane would be a permitted use, with 21 total proposed. The stacking spaces per lane requirements in the surrounding region range between four and seven spaces, but with the possibility of backups onto the street, it is practical to recommend the higher end of the spectrum moving forward with any new development proposed.

B-6/CZ-14 Zoning Standards

Standards	B-6	CZ-14 Changes
Development Standards	Minimum Lot Size—10,000 SF Setbacks Front: 10’ Side Yard: 10’ Abutting side Street: 25’ Minimum Rear Yard: 10’ New construction shall be screened from adjoining residentially zoned property by a brick wall at least 6 feet in height. The wall shall be landscaped on both sides with shrubs spaced no more than 3 feet apart.	Setbacks Front: 10’ Side Yard: 10’ Abutting side Street: 25’ Minimum Rear Yard: 45’ Buffer A 30-foot-wide planted buffer strip along the rear of the property shall separate the property from abutting single-family zoning districts
Summary of Permitted Uses	Accessory Structure (Cottage, Apartment) Attached Dwellings (townhomes) Dwelling, Single Family Multifamily, Low-density (7.2 dwelling units per acre) Family Care Facility (up to 6 residences) Eating and Drinking (no drive-through) Retail, Neighborhood and Light Service, Business and Personal; Office uses Studio and Specialty School Veterinarians (no outdoor kennels)	• All permitted uses in B-6 • Eating and Drinking (with drive-through) and a minimum 7 stacking spaces per lane

Background and analysis (Cont.)

Proposed Conditional Zoning District: CZ-14 Specific Standards

1. **Base Zoning.** The underlying zoning district for the subject parcel is B-6 (Transitional Business).

2. **Permitted Uses.** The uses permitted in CZ-14 are as follows:

   a. All permitted uses allowed in B-6.

   b. Eating and drinking establishments (with drive-through) with a minimum of seven (7) stacking spaces per lane.

3. **Buffer.** A 30-foot-wide planted buffer strip shall separate the subject properties from property lines abutting R-15 zoning. Mature trees within the 30-foot-wide buffer must remain. Credit for utilizing existing trees on site greater than or equal to required standards shall be two trees for every one tree retained. To maintain the same level of screening performance across the expanded area, the planting requirements of Section 712 will be applied at twice their normal intensity. This means the buffer must contain four staggered rows of trees and shrubs (instead of the standard two), spaced according to the Section 712 Buffering and Screening standards in the Lenoir Ordinance, so that a continuous six-foot-tall screen is established within two years.

4. **Setbacks.** For any development abutting single-family zoning districts and/or uses (R-15), the minimum setback is 45 feet. All other setbacks are the same as prescribed in the B-6 zoning district, which are:

   Front: 10 ft.

   Side: 10 ft.

   Street side: 10 ft.

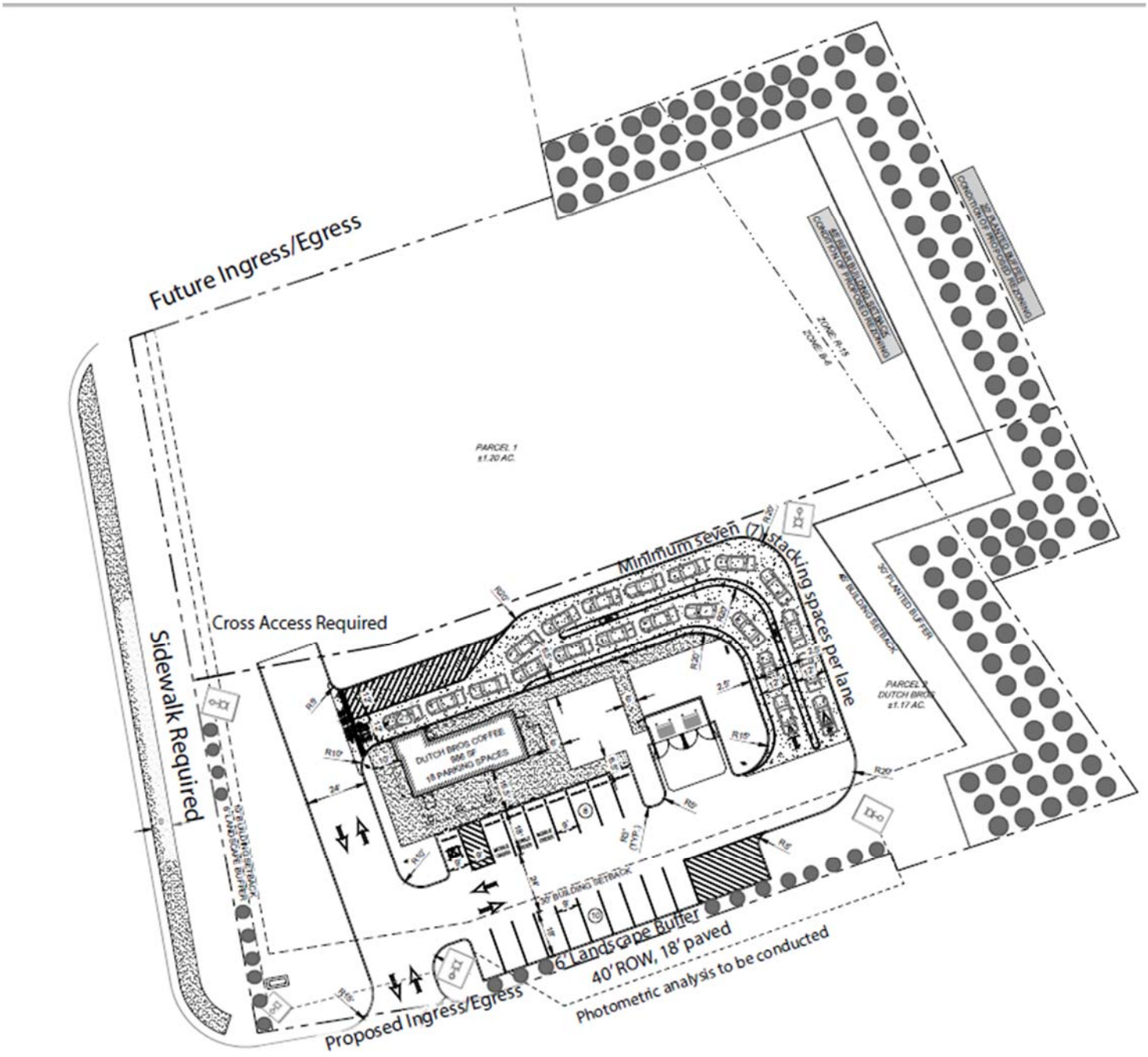
5. **Design Standards**.

   A. Design Standards for Commercial, Office, Institutional, And Government Buildings found in Section 714 must be met, which includes but is not limited to building features including materials, colors, and entrances; landscaping; outdoor storage, garbage collection, and loading areas; pedestrian flow and movement interior to the site, and an 8-foot wide sidewalk along the Crestline Place & US-321 street frontage.

   B. Drive-throughs must accommodate a minimum of 7 stacking spaces per lane.

6. **Ingress and Egress.** Development must provide ingress and egress from Crestline Place and Ellison Place when appropriate for development. Cross-access for the property must be established for sufficient traffic circulation and safety. No ingress or egress is permitted along US-321.

Black and White Site Plan—Updated 4/18/26



Consistency Statement/Staff Recommendations

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan/Reasonableness of Amendment

When adopting or rejecting any zoning amendment, City Council must adopt a brief statement describing whether or not the action is consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan, in accordance with G.S. 160D-605(a), and must also address the reasonableness of any proposed map amendments. Staff offers the following draft statement on the consistency and reasonableness of the request.

The proposed Conditional Zoning Ordinance is consistent with 2045 Comprehensive Plan, because it is identified as Neighborhood Mixed Use on the Future Land Use Map where restaurants and light retail are appropriate land uses and largely permissible in B-6 zoning. The proposed development is a drive-through that addresses neighboring residential concerns with a wide natural buffer and proper traffic circulation into and out of the site. It also addresses a pressing desire by Lenoir residents to attract new businesses to the area and intentionally support new commercial opportunities. Staff finds the proposed Conditional Zoning Ordinance to be reasonable and in the public interest as it provides practical development standards tailored to a complex site and fulfills goals set out by the 2045 Comprehensive Plan.

Planning Board Recommendations

Site Photos

Below: Crestline and 321 intersection, approximate location of the future drive way will be to the right.



Below: Existing rear buffer on the site, that will need to be improved to meet proposed conditions





Above: Northeast corner of site, overlooking front building to be re-moved and 321.



Above: Ellison Place and 321

SITE PHOTOS



Above: House on site, pending removal

Below: Vacant house in the middle of the site

